

Claims

What is claimed is:

5 1. A method for use in a distributed collaborative computing system with two or more collaborative computing devices coupled via a communication network and respectively executing a collaborative application thereon, the method comprising the steps of:

10 associating one or more identifiers with data units respectively entered by one or more users at at least one of the two or more collaborative computing devices so that data entered by the one or more users is uniquely identifiable in the distributed collaborative computing system; and

15 storing the data units and the one or more associated unique identifiers, the stored data units and associated unique identifier being accessible to the two or more collaborative computing devices in the distributed collaborative computing system in accordance with the collaborative application.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the two or more collaborative computing devices are whiteboard systems.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the associating step is performed before the data units are entered by the one or more users.

20 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the associating step is performed substantially contemporaneous with the entry of the data units by the one or more users.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the associating step is performed after the data units are entered by the one or more users.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the associating step further comprises determining an identifier to be associated with the data units entered by a user via an input device used by the user to enter the data units.

5 7. The method of claim 1, wherein the associating step further comprises determining an identifier to be associated with the data units entered by a user via a personal code automatically sensed through an input device used by the user to enter the data units.

10 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the associating step further comprises determining an identifier to be associated with the data units entered by a user via a biometric feature associated with the user entering the data units.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the biometric feature comprises at least one of a fingerprint, a handwriting pattern, a speech pattern, and a retinal pattern extracted from the user.

15 10. The method of claim 9, wherein the biometric data is converted to compressed form and transmitted to a pen sensing unit.

20 11. Apparatus for use in accordance with at least one computing device of a distributed collaborative computing system with two or more collaborative computing devices coupled via a communication network and respectively executing a collaborative application thereon, the apparatus comprising:

at least one processor operative to: (i) associate one or more identifiers with data units respectively entered by one or more users at the at least one collaborative computing device so that data entered by the one or more users is uniquely identifiable in the distributed collaborative computing system; and (ii) store the data units and the one or

more associated unique identifiers, the stored data units and associated unique identifier being accessible to the collaborative computing devices in the distributed collaborative computing system in accordance with the collaborative application.

5 12. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the two or more collaborative computing devices are whiteboard systems.

13. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the associating operation is performed before the data units are entered by the one or more users.

14. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the associating operation is performed substantially contemporaneous with the entry of the data units by the one or more users.

10 15. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the associating operation is performed after the data units are entered by the one or more users.

16. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the associating operation further comprises determining an identifier to be associated with the data units entered by a user via an input device used by the user to enter the data units.

15 17. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the associating operation further comprises determining an identifier to be associated with the data units entered by a user via a personal code automatically sensed through an input device used by the user to enter the data units.

20 18. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the associating operation further comprises determining an identifier to be associated with the data units entered by a user via a biometric feature associated with the user entering the data units.

19. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the biometric feature comprises at least one of a fingerprint, a handwriting pattern, a speech pattern, and a retinal pattern extracted from the user.

5 20. Apparatus for use in accordance with at least one computing device in a distributed collaborative computing system with two or more collaborative computing devices coupled via a communication network and respectively executing a collaborative application thereon, the apparatus comprising:

one or more input devices used by one or more users to enter data units at the computing device;

10 user identification means for associating one or more identifiers with the data units respectively entered by the one or more users at the computing device so that data entered by the one or more users is uniquely identifiable in the distributed collaborative computing system; and

15 memory for storing the data units and the one or more associated unique identifiers, the stored data units and associated unique identifier being accessible to the collaborative computing devices in the distributed collaborative computing system in accordance with the collaborative application.

20 21. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the user identification means includes a user settable switch associated with an input device for permitting the user to enter a unique identifiable code.

22. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the user identification means includes a personal area network system associated with an input device for permitting automatic entry of a unique identifiable code.

23. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the user identification means includes a biometric recognition system for permitting automatic identification of a user based on at least one biometric feature associated with the user.